

legal recognition to couples who are, for various reasons, currently denied it," said ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope. "The ACT government is committed to equality."

Australia has a national law limiting marriage to opposite-sex couplings, and Attorney General Philip Ruddock said the federal government will attempt to block the ACT from using federally licensed marriage celebrants to conduct same-sex union ceremonies.

But Ruddock said the feds are OK with states and territories granting same-sex couples the rights of marriage as long as the laws don't "create confusion over the distinction between marriage and same-sex relationships," *The Age* newspaper reported.

Domestic Violence Law to Cover Gays in Taiwan

Taiwan's interior minister, Lee Yi-Yang, announced March 22 that the Domestic Violence Prevention Law is applicable to same-sex couples, *The Taipei Times* reported.

The determination was made public as legislators reviewed the law in a Judiciary Committee meeting. Speaking in support of the move, legislator Kuo Lin-Yung said gays "have been derided, persecuted and constrained in the past, but now they have begun to speak out [and] must now be equally protected by the law."

Cambodians March for Pride

About 400 people marched in the third Gay Pride parade March 31 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Parties and other events continued through the weekend. The parade was organized by the Salt Lounge bar and sponsored by Population Services International, Family Health International and the Women's Network for Unity, according to the German Press Agency.

AMERICAS

Colombian President Favors Gay Couple Rights

Colombian President Álvaro Uribe supports granting gay couples spousal rights in areas such as inheritance and health care.

During a meeting with college students March 25, Uribe was asked, "Will you and your political team support legislation to provide civil rights and social security [health care] to same-sex partners?"

He responded: "I will be completely sincere. First topic, marriage: No. Second topic, adoption: No. Inheritance rights: Yes. Social security: Yes."

Uribe added that he was prepared to grant same-sex couples access to social security benefits "immediately" and to pension benefits "gradually." The latter will take time "due to the country's fiscal problems," he said, according to a report in *El Tiempo*.

The government responded to Uribe's comments March 29 by throwing its support behind a bill already pending in the Senate. The measure grants gay couples access to spousal rights in the areas of inheritance, division of property, health care and pensions.

A recent Gallup poll found that 77 percent of



Australian Capital Territory Chief Minister Jon Stanhope says his government is "committed to equality."

Colombians oppose recognition of same-sex unions.

Bahamas Bans Brokeback Mountain

The Bahamas Plays and Films Control Board banned *Brokeback Mountain* March 30. A spokesman cited the film's nudity, profanity and "extreme homosexuality."

The board reportedly took action at the request of the Bahamas Christian Council. Gay groups and some media personalities denounced the ban.

Canadian Tories Threaten Same-Sex Marriage

Canada's ruling Conservative Party will follow through on a campaign pledge to revisit the nation's legalization of same-sex marriage, Justice Minister Vic Toews said April 5.

The government will engineer a "free vote" on the matter in the House of Commons—meaning Conservative members of Parliament will be permitted to vote their consciences rather than the party's position. Other parties could choose to grant their MPs the same freedom.

Toews said the vote will happen "sooner rather than later."

Parliament granted same-sex couples access to full marriage last July, under the then-Liberal government. By that time, courts already had forced legalization of same-sex marriage in nine of Canada's 13 provinces and territories.

"[This] is about the Charter of Rights," said then-Prime Minister Paul Martin. "In a nation of minorities, it is important that you don't cherry-pick rights. A right is a right."

Same-sex marriage also is legal in Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and Massachusetts. A court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage in South Africa will take effect Dec. 1 unless Parliament makes the change sooner.

Foreign couples are welcome to marry in Canada, and only Quebec has any kind of waiting period. **io**

Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.



Colombian President Álvaro Uribe supports spousal rights for gay couples but not marriage.

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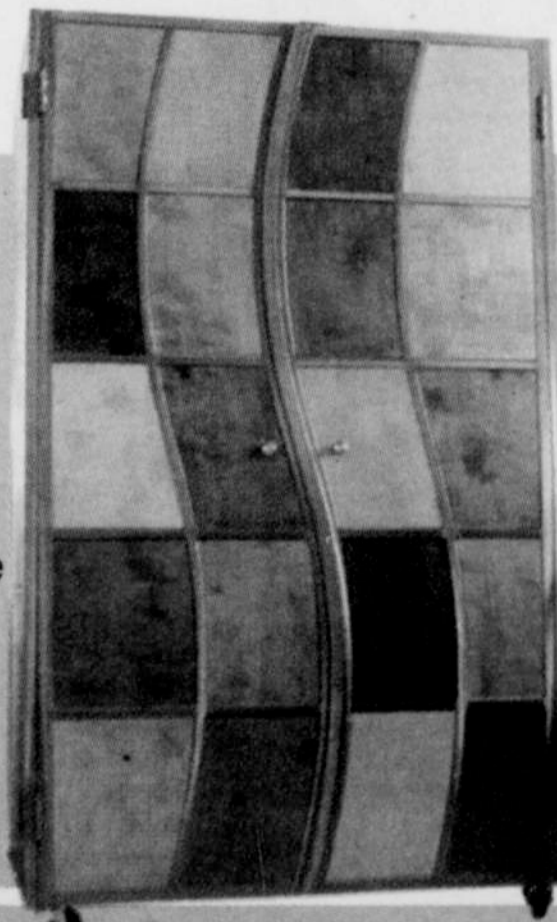
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